

# 2003 LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

## 13TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

### PRESERVING AND CREATING JOBS: OUR TOP PRIORITY

I was pleased that my first year as your state legislator brought landmark reforms to the state's unemployment insurance and workers' compensation systems. They will make Washington more attractive to the employers who provide the jobs our citizens need. Our state has lost approximately 160,000 jobs over the past few years, and we need to turn that around.

Besides aiding employers, those reforms will help make Washington a serious contender in the national competition to build Boeing's new 7E7 "Dreamliner" aircraft. Moses Lake is still among the sites under consideration. The Legislature also approved a big package of tax incentives for Boeing – but they will take effect *only* if the 7E7 work comes to Washington.

**Issues for 2004:** As of Jan. 1, Washington will have the highest minimum wage, which discourages hiring. Also, I am keeping tabs on federal legislation that would end the ban on commercial development at rest areas along federal highway and allow development on a test basis. Washington apparently is being considered as one of the test states. If the legislation passes, it would be terrible for communities in Central Washington with traveler-oriented businesses. I would work to keep Washington from participating and protect our small employers.

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### STATE REPRESENTATIVE BILL HINKLE

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# STATE REPRESENTATIVE **BILL HINKLE**

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November 2003

*Dear friends,*

*This report looks at some of the key issues the Legislature addressed during its session earlier this year – a session in which four bills I introduced became law. It also highlights concerns that deserve our attention during the 2004 legislative session, which begins in two months. Please take a few minutes to read it, and don't hesitate to let me know your thoughts. Call, send e-mails, write letters, or come by when I have "office hours" or public meetings in our district. I'm always happy to hear from you.*

*Sincerely,*

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Bill Hinkle". The signature is fluid and cursive.

**Rep. Bill Hinkle**

## **TRANSPORTATION PACKAGE LACKED TAXPAYER PROTECTIONS**

As drivers have known since summer, the Legislature raised the gas tax by 5 cents. You also may have experienced the 15 percent increase in truck weight fees and the title transfer fee added to the costs you pay when you buy a vehicle. The money raised will go largely to Puget Sound area highway projects, but also public transit and ferries.



I'm concerned about the traffic congestion on the west side of the Cascades because it affects the flow of people and freight to and from our side of the mountains. However, the plan passed by the Legislature gives citizens no assurances that the money raised through higher taxes will truly reduce traffic congestion. It also went too far with the fees, and I wasn't convinced the money it raises will be used efficiently and distributed fairly. That's why I voted against it.

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## **FINALLY, A LEANER STATE BUDGET**

Most of you who contacted me about the state's \$2.7 billion budget "shortfall" wanted to solve it by reducing spending, not raising taxes. The majority party in the House went the opposite way at first, calling for hundreds of millions of dollars in new taxes. In the end, the House and Senate compromised on an operating budget balanced *without a general tax increase*. We also put \$300 million in reserve and avoided spending almost \$400 million in federal aid "windfall" money.

Also, when the 2004 session begins in January, we'll look at whether the budget needs adjusting for its second year. That will depend a lot on the state's caseload forecast, which comes out this month and shows how K-12 school enrollments, inmate populations and demand for state-paid health care services affect the spending side of the budget.



**Issues for 2004:** The budget didn't maintain a set of tax incentives that help attract and retain employers. It also cut assistance to local governments – a sore point for a former county commissioner like me, who is concerned about funding for local law and justice activities, and public health services.

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## FUNDING IMPORTANT EDUCATION NEEDS

The governor proposed suspending both of the education initiatives passed by the voters in 2000 – Initiative 728, the “class-size” measure, and I-732, to give teachers additional raises. Fortunately, the new state operating budget I helped pass is more education-friendly, without raising general-fund taxes. It still contains \$398 million for I-728 and increases the per-student grant to \$254, or 20 percent higher than the governor wanted. It raises first-year teachers’ salaries to \$30,000, and funds salary increases for teachers with seven or fewer years’ experience.



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## PROTECTION FOR MEDICAL, MENTAL HEALTH CARE

As a former professional paramedic, I’m happy the new state budget protects Basic Health Plan coverage for 100,000 low-income families, which is 40,000 more families than the governor’s proposed budget would have covered. It protects health care services for children living at up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level, and provides a 75-cent-per-hour pay raise for home health care workers. The Legislature also made a small step in the right direction with a prescription drug law designed to save state money in purchasing medications for people with government health coverage.



As a member of the Juvenile Justice & Family Law Committee, I was pleased the budget avoided drastic cuts in services for developmentally disabled and troubled children. Also, **House Bill 1612**, which I introduced, became law: If a parent seeks to have his or her child treated at a mental health evaluation and treatment facility, the facility now must provide written and verbal notice to the parents regarding the treatment options available and procedures to follow.

**Issues for 2004:** Too many physicians are leaving the state or closing their practices because of high insurance costs and low reimbursements for state-insured care. We need reforms to help small employers offer affordable coverage to their employees. I also hope to see real senior prescription drug assistance, to help our low-income seniors get the medicine they need but can’t afford.

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## IMPROVEMENTS IN WATER LAW

I was happy to introduce House Bill 1113, which allows formation of a Kittitas board of joint control like the one which has operated for years in the Yakima Valley. Its passage into law means Kittitas-area water purveyors now will have an easier time working together on water-quality and fish issues.

Even more important statewide was our approval of a new law that protects the rights of water-right holders. Until this year, the Department of Ecology would enforce water-quality laws by prohibiting the legal use of water. Now it must pursue higher financial penalties instead.

**Issues for 2004:** Rep. Bruce Chandler, from Granger in the legislative district south of ours, has been the “point person” on water legislation for House Republicans. However, Rep. Chandler’s recent selection as House Republican Deputy Leader means I’ll be getting more involved in water issues. I look forward to this new responsibility.



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## ENVIRONMENTAL AND LAND MANAGEMENT



We passed legislation that would reduce releases of mercury to the environment while protecting interstate trade and Washington industries that still use the element in manufacturing. Democrats introduced the bill; I proposed a rewrite that won their support even though it meant less regulation. The new law creates a repository to keep mercury from being reused, resold or reintroduced back into the environment.

**Issues for 2004:** The House and Senate adopted a bill that would have reformed the trapping ban (from Initiative 713, in 2000) to allow the use of body-gripping traps for nuisance animals and wildlife-population controls. The governor vetoed it, but I'm ready to go another round on behalf of the growers, ranchers, dairymen, irrigation districts, airports, orchardists and tree farmers who hoped for the reform.

I also plan to see what we can do as a Legislature to make permitting processes go smoother, and renew my effort to strengthen local control concerning development-related decisions.

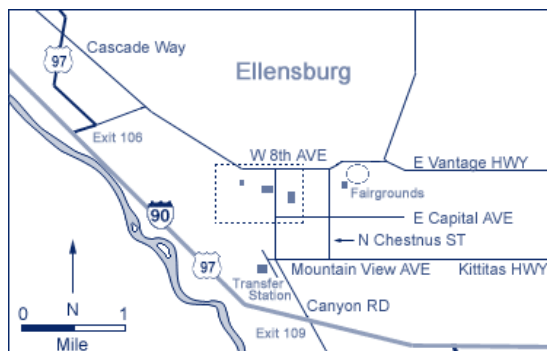
## YOU'RE INVITED TO A PUBLIC MEETING ON PERMITTING

**10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. • Saturday, November 22**

**Fine Arts Building (follow the signs)**

**Kittitas County Fairgrounds**

**512 N. Poplar St., Ellensburg**



I've been appointed to the Legislature's Joint Work Group on Permitting Processes. I invite you to come to this meeting, share your experiences with the various permitting processes and offer ideas for improvement that I can take back to the task force. A panel of state and local government representatives from permitting agencies will be at the meeting to share their perspective and help with our discussion. Hope to see you there!

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